

(185131.1)

CONTAINER LID WITH CLOSURE MEMBER

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS:

This Application is a Continuation-in-Part (CIP) of pending U.S. Application No. 10/641,498 filed on August 15, 2003, which is a Continuation of U.S. Application No. 09/923,758 filed on August 6, 2001 and issued as U.S. Patent No. 6,679,397 on January 20, 2004.

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FEDERALLY SPONSORED RESEARCH OR DEVELOPMENT:

Not Applicable.

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TECHNICAL FIELD:

The present invention relates to a lid for a container. More specifically, the present invention relates to a lid for a flowable substance container wherein the lid includes a closure member.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION:

Lids for containers are well-known in the beverage container industry. In general terms, lids for single-use or disposable containers have three main components: a top wall or surface, a mounting portion, and an opening. Typically, the mounting portion is adapted to engage an upper rim of the container to seal the lid on the container. The opening is adapted to permit the flow of the container contents through the lid.

Existing lid designs suffer from a number of problems including untimely spillage through the opening due to the lack of a reliable means for sealing the opening. The inability to effectively seal the opening can also result in a significant loss of heat from the container contents through the opening. To address these and other problems, a number of lid designs include a cover portion for the opening. However, most cover portions lack structural integrity and can interfere with a user consuming the container contents through the opening.

U.S. Patent No. 4,738,373 to DeParales discloses a container lid where the opening is formed after a hinged tear panel is removed from an outer edge of the lid. Due to its hinged construction, the tear panel can unexpectedly rotate back towards the edge while a user is drinking from the container, thereby interfering with the discharge of the container contents. In addition, it is quite difficult to completely re-seal the opening with the tear panel once it is initially removed from the edge of the container.

Another example of a lid having an attached cover for the opening is disclosed in U.S. Patent No. 4,899,902 to DeMars. There, a cover is placed over a spout extending upward from the lid. The lid contains no structure to retain and/or secure the cover once it is removed from the spout. Because the cover remains unsecured while the user is drinking from the container, the cover can obstruct the use of the lid. Accordingly, the effectiveness of the lid is compromised.

Therefore, there is a definite need for a container lid with a cover portion that effectively re-seals the opening therein. In addition, there is a need for lid with a cover portion that can be reliably secured such that the cover portion does not interfere with the discharge of the container contents.

The present invention is provided to solve these and other problems.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION:

The present invention relates to a lid for a container holding a flowable substance. 5 The lid has an annular top wall and a side wall depending from the top wall. The side wall has a mounting portion for connecting the lid on the container. The lid includes an opening in the top wall, the opening adapted to permit the flow of the substance through the lid. A retaining member is positioned in the top wall.

In accord with the invention, the lid includes a closure member positioned on the 10 mounting portion, the closure member having a plug. In further accord with the invention, the closure member is movable between a first position and a second position, wherein at least a portion of the plug is received in the opening in the first position and wherein at least a portion of the plug is received in the retaining member in the second position.

In further accord with the invention, the opening and the plug are cooperatively 15 dimensioned such that at least a portion of the plug is removably inserted in the opening. Similarly, the retaining member and the plug are cooperatively dimensioned such that at least a portion of the plug is removably inserted in the retaining member. The closure member is flexible thereby facilitating movement of the closure member between the first and second positions.

20 In still further accord with the invention, the position of the retaining member in the top wall is varied. The location of the retaining member relative to the drink opening defines an angle that ranges generally between five and one hundred and eighty degrees. In the five degree position, the retaining member is located adjacent the drink opening. In the ninety degree position, the retaining member is located at a right angle to the drink opening. In the one hundred eighty degree position, the retaining member is located opposite the drink 25 opening. Since the plug is received by the retaining member in the second position, the configuration of the closure member varies with the positioning of the retaining member.

Other features and advantages of the invention will be apparent from the following

specification taken in conjunction with the following drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS:

FIG. 1 is a perspective view of the lid of the present invention, showing a closure member extending from the lid;

5 FIG. 2 is a partial end view of the closure member of the lid of FIG. 1;

FIG. 3 is a partial cross-sectional view of a retaining member of the lid of FIG. 1;

10 FIG. 4 is a partial cross-sectional view of the closure member received by an opening of the lid of FIG. 1;

FIG. 5 is a partial cross-sectional view of the closure member received by a retaining member of the lid of FIG. 1;

15 FIG. 6 is end view of the lid of FIG. 1, showing the path of movement of the closure member between a first position and a second position;

FIG. 7 is a perspective view of an alternate embodiment of the lid of the present invention, showing a member positioned between the lid and the closure member;

15 FIG. 8 is a perspective view of the lid of FIG. 1, showing the closure member in the first position;

FIG. 9 is a perspective view of the lid of FIG. 1, showing the closure member in the second position;

20 FIG. 10 is a perspective view of an alternate embodiment of the lid of the present invention, showing a closure member extending radially outward from the lid;

FIG. 11 is a perspective view of an alternate embodiment of the lid of the present invention, showing a closure member extending radially outward from the lid;

25 FIG. 12 is perspective view of an alternate embodiment of the lid of the present invention, showing a closure member extending from the lid;

FIG. 13 is a perspective view of the lid of FIG. 1;

FIG. 14 is a plan view of the lid of FIG. 1;

FIG. 15 is a plan view of an alternate embodiment of the lid of the present invention,

showing the position of the drink opening and the retaining member in the lid;

FIG. 16 is a plan view of an alternate embodiment of the lid of the present invention, showing the position of the drink opening and the retaining member in the lid;

FIG. 17 is a plan view of an alternate embodiment of the lid of the present invention, showing the position of the drink opening and the retaining member in the lid;

FIG. 18 is a plan view of an alternate embodiment of the lid of the present invention, showing the position of the drink opening and the retaining member in the lid;

FIG. 19 is a plan view of an alternate embodiment of the lid of the present invention, showing the position of the drink opening and the retaining member in the lid;

FIG. 20 is a plan view of an alternate embodiment of the lid of the present invention, showing the position of the drink opening and the retaining member in the lid; and,

FIG. 21 is a plan view of an alternate embodiment of the lid of the present invention, showing the position of the drink opening and the retaining member in the lid.

15 DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION:

While this invention is susceptible of embodiment in many different forms, there is shown in the drawings and will herein be described in detail preferred embodiments of the invention with the understanding that the present disclosure is to be considered as an exemplification of the principles of the invention and is not intended to limit the broad aspect of the invention to the embodiments illustrated.

20 A lid 10 for a container (not shown) of the present invention is illustrated in FIG. 1. The container has a central opening defining a volume that can be used to contain or hold a flowable substance, for example a liquid or a powder. It is understood that the container can assume a variety of different forms and shapes.

25 The lid 10 includes a generally annular top wall 12 with a top wall surface 14 and an outer peripheral edge 16. A generally annular outer side wall 18 depends from top wall 12 at the peripheral edge 16. The side wall 18 has a side wall surface 20 and a lower edge 22. A mounting portion 24 depends from the side wall 18 at the lower edge 22. The mounting

portion 24 includes a generally annular flange 26 and a generally annular skirt 27. The mounting portion 24 is adapted for connecting the lid 10 to the container in a manner that seals the lid 10 on the container. Thus, the mounting portion 24 prevents leakage of the container contents between the lid 10 and the container when the lid 10 is positioned on the 5 container. In a preferred embodiment, the container contents are a liquid and the mounting portion 24 is integral with the side wall 18.

An aperture or drink opening 28 is preferably located in the top wall surface 14. Alternatively, the opening 28 can be located in a portion of the side wall 18. The opening 28 is adapted to permit the passage or flow of the flowable substance held by the container 10 through the lid 10. The opening 28 has an edge 29 that defines the shape of the opening 28. Although shown in FIG. 1 as having an oval or obround shape, the opening 28 can have a variety of shapes, including but not limited to circular, square, or rectangular.

As further shown in FIG. 1, the lid 10 also has a closure member 30. In a preferred embodiment, closure member 30 is positioned on a portion of the annular skirt 27. The closure member 30 includes a first end 32, a second end 34, and an intermediate portion 36. The first end 32 includes a base portion 38, which can have various configurations, including the rounded edge shown in FIG. 1. Preferably, the first end 32 extends from the skirt 27, however, the first end 32 could depend from a portion of the top wall 12, the side wall 18, or the mounting portion 24. The closure member 30 is preferably formed from the same 15 20 material of the lid 10.

The intermediate portion or arm 36 connects the first end 32 and second end 34. Preferably, the arm 36 is flexible and has a curvilinear, arc shape that is similar to the curvilinear shape of the mounting portion 24 and/or the top wall 12. The arc length of the closure member 30, as measured from the first end 32 to the second end 34, can vary 25 according to numerous design parameters. Preferably, the arc length ranges from one-fifth to one-half the circumference of the top wall 12. In a most preferred embodiment, the arc length is approximately 90 degrees. Described in another manner, a vector drawn radially inward from each of ends 32, 34 would intersect to form an approximately 90 degree angle.

The second end 34 has a tab 39 and a plug 40. As shown in FIG. 2, the plug 40 has a generally catenoid shape. The plug 40 has an upper portion 42 and a lower portion 44, where the upper portion 42 has a nose 46. The plug 40 has opposed side walls 48 and opposed end walls 49. Preferably, the walls 48, 49 are sloped. A notch 50 can be located between the upper portion 42 and the lower portion 44. The tab 39 is adapted to permit the movement of the closure member 30 by a user grasping the tab 39.

As shown in FIG. 1, a retaining member 51 is preferably located in the top wall 12. Alternatively, the retaining member 51 is located in a portion of the side wall 18 or a portion of the mounting portion 24. The retaining member 51 includes a cavity 52 adapted to receive and/or secure the plug 40 of the closure member 30. The cavity 52 has an upper edge 54 defining the shape of the cavity 52. Although shown in FIG. 1 as having an obround shape, the cavity 28 can have a variety of shapes, including but not limited to circular, square, or rectangular. Referring to FIG. 3, an inner wall 56 depends from the upper edge 54 and terminates at a generally planar bottom wall 58. Preferably the inner wall 56 is sloped to facilitate engagement with the notch 50 and/or a portion of the side and end walls 48, 49 during the insertion and/or the removal of the plug 40. Because the retaining member 51 has a bottom wall 58, the flowable substance in the container cannot flow through the member 51. Furthermore, the retaining member 51 is generally configured to receive at least a portion of the plug 40 in an interference fit as described in greater detail below.

At a first position P1, the opening 28 receives at least a portion of the plug 40. As shown in FIGS. 4 and 8, when the plug 40 is located in the first position, the edge 29 of the opening 28 is in frictional engagement with a portion of the walls 48, 49 of the plug 40. In a preferred embodiment, at first position P1, the notch 50 is proximate the edge 29. Described in a different manner, the plug 40 and the opening 28 are in an interference fit wherein at least a portion of the upper portion 42 and the nose 46 are positioned below the top wall 12. Alternatively, the plug 40 can be further inserted into the opening 28 such that at least a portion of the lower portion 44 is positioned below the top wall 12. When the closure member 30 is in the first position P1, the plug 40 forms a seal with the opening 28.

This seal prevents the flow of the flowable substance in the container through the opening 28, enabling the container and lid 10 to be moved without risking spillage. Alternatively, the plug 40 and the opening 28 are in a snap fit engagement, or interference engagement wherein each have sufficient structure to enable such engagement. Other cooperating structures can

5 also be utilized.

At a second position, P2, the retaining member 51 receives at least a portion of the plug 40. As shown in FIGS. 5 and 9, when the plug 40 is located in the second position P2, the upper edge 54 of the cavity 52 and/or a portion of the side wall 56 is in frictional engagement with the side walls 48 of the plug 40 and a portion of the lower portion 44 is proximate the top wall surface 14. Described in a different manner, the plug 40 and the cavity 52 are in an interference fit wherein at least a portion of the upper portion 42 and the nose 46 are positioned below the top wall 12. Alternatively, the degree of insertion of the plug 40 is reduced such that the notch 50 is proximate the edge 54. When the closure member 30 is in the second position P2, the plug 40 is secured in place thereby preventing unwanted movement of the closure member 30. This securement prevents the plug 40 and the closure member 30 from becoming dislodged while a user discharges the contents of the container through the opening 28. Alternatively, the plug 40 and the cavity 52 are in a snap fit engagement, or interference engagement wherein each have sufficient structure to enable such engagement. By retaining the plug 40 in the second position P2, the closure member 30 does not interfere with a user discharging the flowable contents through the opening 28.

Once the plug 40 is dislodged from the opening 28, the closure member 30 is movable from the first position P1 to the second position P2. Similarly, once the once the plug 40 is dislodged from the retaining member 51, the closure member 30 is movable from the second position P2 to the first position P1. Referring to FIG. 6, when the closure member 30 moves between the first position P1 and the second position P2, the plug 40 can rotate along a curvilinear path, CP, above the top wall 12. Since the closure member 30 rotates about the fixed base portion 38, the rotation of the second end 34 and the plug 40 can be characterized as planar, where the second end 34 and the plug 40 rotate in a generally vertical

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plane. Described in a different manner, the second end 34 and the plug 40 rotate in a plane that is generally perpendicular to a horizontal plane defined by the top wall 12. A living hinge is embodied within the closure member 30 which facilitates the movement of the closure member 30 between the first position P1 and second position P2. Preferably, the living hinge is positioned proximal the first end 32.

At an alternate second position P2, the plug 40 is neither received by the opening 28 nor the retaining member 51. Instead, the plug 40 is positioned a distance from the mounting portion 24 as shown in FIG. 1. In the alternate second position P2, the movement of the plug 40 is restricted only by the configuration and structure of the closure member 30. However, a user can move the plug 40 from the alternate second position P2 into engagement with the opening 28. In the alternate second position P2, the closure member 30 generally does not interfere with a user discharging the flowable contents through the opening 28.

Alternatively, the retaining member 51 can include other means to retain the closure member 30. For example, a pin can be positioned on one of either the retaining member 51 or the closure member 30. A socket adapted to receive the pin can be positioned on the other of the retaining member 51 or the closure member 30. The pin and socket are cooperatively dimensioned such that the pin is received by the socket and as a result, the plug 40 is retained in the retaining member 51. As another example, a portion of the retaining member 51 has a plurality of teeth configured to cooperatively engage a plurality of teeth located on a portion of the closure member 30. The retaining member 51 and the closure member 30 can be proximately positioned such that the teeth intermesh or engage. In this manner, the plug 40 is retained by the retaining member 51.

Unlike prior art designs, the dimensions and the configuration of the opening 28 are not affected by either the insertion of the plug 40 into the opening 28 or the removal of the plug 40 from the opening 28. Similarly, the dimensions and the configuration of the retaining member 51 are not affected by either the insertion of the plug 40 into the opening 28 or the removal of the plug 40 from the retaining member 51. As a result, the dimensions and the configuration of both the opening 28 and the retaining member 51 remain constant

when the closure member 30 moves between the first position and the second position. This attribute allows a user to repeatedly move the closure member 30 between the first position and second position. Accordingly, the structural integrity and the durability of the lid 10 are increased.

5 Referring to FIG. 1, the lid 10 includes a center portion 57 positioned radially inward of the top wall 12. An inner side wall 60 depends from an inner edge 61 of the top wall 12. A ridge 62 is located at the base of the side wall 60 proximate the center portion 57. The ridge 62 increases the structural rigidity of the lid 10. Furthermore, the ridge 62 and the center portion 57 facilitate the stacking of multiple combinations of a lid 10 and a container, meaning a first lid 10 connected to a first container stacked on a second lid 10 connected to a second container. In this configuration, the ridge 62 and the center portion 57 of the second lid 10 act as a receiver and a locating feature to engage a lower portion of the first container. Consequently, the first lid 10 and the first container are stacked on the second lid 10 and the second container in a stable and secure manner, which increases the flexibility and 10 marketability of the lid 10.

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The center portion 57 includes a recessed portion 64 that is adapted to receive a lip of a person drinking from the container. The shape and configuration of the recessed portion 64 can be varied to conform to numerous design parameters. The recessed portion 64 can include a first wall 66 and a second wall 68 where both walls are sloped causing the recessed portion 64 to have a generally inclined surface. Due to the sloped walls 66, 68, the height of the inner side wall 60 at the recessed portion 64 is greater than the height of the inner side wall 60 at the center portion 57.

20 As shown in FIG. 1, a vent hole 70 can be located in the center portion 57 of the lid 10. Preferably, the vent hole 70 is located in the center portion 57 proximate the ridge 62; however, the vent hole 70 can be located in the top wall 12. The vent hole 70 is adapted to ensure the continuous flow of the container contents through the opening 28 while venting the container.

25 A drain hole (not shown) can be located in the recessed portion 64, preferably in the

second wall 68 near the side wall 60 and in alignment with the drink opening 28. When the flowable contents, *i.e.* liquid, accumulate in the recessed portion 64, the drain hole 72 ensures the drainage of such contents into the container.

The opening 28 can be formed with a range of dimensions. At a minimum, the opening 28 should have dimensions sufficient to permit the passage of the flowable substance held by the container and receive the plug 40. The retaining member 51 can be formed with a range of dimensions. At a minimum, the retaining member 51 should have dimensions sufficient to receive and secure the plug 40.

The opening 28 can be located at various positions along the top wall 12 depending upon design parameters. Similarly, the retaining member 51 can be located at various positions along the top wall 12. The opening 28 and the retaining member 51 can be proximate each other, or spaced a distance apart. Preferably, the opening 28 and the retaining member 51 are opposed on the top wall 12, meaning that they are positioned approximately 180 degrees apart.

The closure member 30 can be positioned in a number of locations between the opening 28 and the retaining member 51. However, the first end 32 of the closure member 30 is preferably positioned approximately 90 degrees from the opening 28. Described in another manner, the first end 32 is positioned approximately 90 degrees from retaining member 51. Described in yet another manner, the second end 34 is positioned approximately 180 degrees from the opening 28.

Although shown as having a generally circular shape, the lid 10, including the mounting portion 24, the flange 26 and the skirt 28, can have numerous configurations. For example, the lid 10 could have a rectangular, square, or oval shape. To ensure a leak-proof seal with the container, the shape of the mounting portion 24 should match the shape of the upper edge of the container so a cooperative sealing engagement can be achieved.

Alternatively, the mounting portion 24 could have a shape similar to the upper edge of the container, yet dissimilar from the shape of the side wall 18 and the top wall 12. For example, the mounting portion 24 could have an annular shape consistent with the container

shape and the walls 12, 18 could have a non-annular shape.

The lid 10 can be manufactured by a variety of manufacturing processes, such as injection molding or a thermoforming operation, preferably vacuum forming and/or pressure forming. The lid 10 is preferably formed from plastic, however, other lightweight materials can be used to form the lid 10. Preferably, the lid 10 is formed from a one piece construction, meaning that the closure member 30 is integrally formed with the lid 10. Alternatively, the closure member 30 can be connected to the lid in a separate step of the formation process.

After the thermoforming operation has been completed, the drink opening 28, the vent hole 70 and the drain hole may be formed in the lid 10. The drink opening 28, the vent hole 70 and the drain hole can be formed with a punch and die. The vent hole 70 and drain hole, which are generally smaller than the drink opening 28, may each be formed by puncturing the lid 10 with a pointed tool.

In another preferred embodiment shown in FIG. 7, the lid 10 includes a securing tab 110 adapted to secure the closure member 30 to the lid 10. The securing tab 110 includes a first portion 112 attached proximate the second end 34 of the closure member 30, and a second portion 114 attached to the skirt 27. A seam 116 can be located between the first and second portions 112, 114. The position, configuration and length of the securing tab 110 can vary with the design parameters, including the configuration of the closure member 30 and the mounting portion 24. The securing tab 110 can be positioned in various locations along the skirt 27. This means that the securing tab 110 can be positioned proximate the first end 32, proximate the second end 34, or at a location between the first and second ends 32, 34. In addition, the securing tab 110 can be connected to a portion of the top wall 14, the side wall 18, or the mounting portion 24.

The securing tab 110 is adapted to rupture along the seam 116 when a sufficient amount of force is applied to the tab 110. Prior to being ruptured, the securing tab 110 fixes the closure member 30 in a generally stable position such that a plurality of lids 10 can be stacked in a vertical configuration. The ability to vertically stack a plurality of lids 10

increases the marketability and versatility of the lid 10 because less storage space is required. After the securing tab 110 is ruptured, the closure member 30 is adapted for movement between the first and second positions P1, P2 about the fixed base portion 38.

Alternatively, the securing tab 110 can be adapted for reattachment after rupture of the tab 110. For example, the first portion 112 can have a plurality of teeth configured to cooperatively engage a plurality of teeth on the second portion 114. After the securing tab 110 is ruptured, the first and second portions 112, 114 can be proximately positioned such that the teeth intermesh or engage. In this manner, the securing tab 110 is reattached and the closure member 30 is fixed in a generally stable position such that the closure member 30 does not interfere with a user discharging the flowable contents through the lid 10.

In another preferred embodiment (not shown), the closure member is formed without a base portion extending from the skirt. In this configuration, there is no space between the skirt and the closure member such that the closure member is proximate the skirt. As a result, the closure member is directly connected to the skirt along the entire length of the closure member. In this configuration, the closure member cannot be moved between the first and second positions P1, P2. Alternatively, the closure member is connected to a portion of the top wall, the side wall, or the mounting portion.

To detach the closure member, a seam is positioned between the closure member and the skirt. The seam is frangible, meaning that it is adapted to be torn or ruptured when a sufficient amount of force is applied in the proper direction. A tear stop is located along the seam and is adapted to halt the tearing or rupturing of the seam. Preferably, the tear stop is located in a portion of the first end of the closure member. Once an appropriate amount of force is applied in the proper direction, the seam begins to rupture and continues to rupture until the tear stop halts the rupturing process. As a result, the closure member is detached from the skirt and is no longer connected to the lid. Consequently, the closure member can be moved between the first and second positions P1, P2.

Another preferred embodiment is shown in FIG. 10. The lid 110 includes a generally annular top wall 112 with a top wall surface 114 and an outer peripheral edge 116. A

generally annular outer side wall 118 depends from top wall 112 at the peripheral edge 116. The side wall 118 has a side wall surface 120 and a lower edge 122. A mounting portion 124 depends from the side wall 118 at the lower edge 122. The mounting portion 124 includes a generally annular flange 126 and a generally annular skirt 127.

5 A drink opening 128 is preferably located in the top wall surface 114. The opening 128 has an edge 129 that defines the shape of the opening 128. The opening 128 is adapted to permit the passage or flow of the flowable substance held by the container through the lid 110.

10 The lid 110 also has a closure member 130. Preferably, the closure member 130 is positioned on a portion of the annular skirt 127. The closure member 130 includes a first end 132, a second end 134, and an intermediate portion 136. The first end 132 includes a base portion 138. Preferably, the first end 132 extends from the skirt 127, however, the first end 132 could depend from a portion of the top wall 112, the side wall 118, or the mounting portion 124. The closure member 130 is preferably formed from the same material of the lid 110. The closure member 130 is adapted to be flexible. The second end 134 has a tab 139 and a plug 140. A notch 150 can be located between an upper portion and a lower portion of the plug 140.

15 As shown in FIG.10, a retaining member 151 is preferably located in the top wall 112. Alternatively, the retaining member 151 is located in a portion of the side wall 118 or a portion of the mounting portion 124. The retaining member 151 includes a cavity 152 adapted to receive and/or secure the plug 140 of the closure member 130. An inner wall depends from an upper edge (not shown) of the member 151 and terminates at a generally planar bottom wall. The retaining member 151 is generally configured to receive at least a portion of the plug 140 in an interference fit as described in greater detail below.

20 At a first position P1, the opening 128 receives at least a portion of the plug 140. When the plug 140 is located in the first position, the edge 129 of the opening 128 is in frictional engagement with a portion of the plug 140. Described in a different manner, the plug 140 and the opening 128 are in an interference fit wherein at least a portion of the plug

140 is positioned below the top wall 112. When the closure member 130 is in the first position P1, the plug 140 forms a seal with the opening 128. This seal prevents the flow of the flowable substance in the container through the opening 128, enabling the container and lid 110 to be moved without risking spillage.

5 At a second position, P2, the retaining member 151 receives at least a portion of the plug 140. When the plug 140 is located in the second position P2, a portion of the retaining member 151 is in frictional engagement with a portion of the plug 140. Described in a different manner, the plug 140 and the cavity 152 are in an interference fit wherein at least a portion of the plug 140 are positioned below the top wall 112. When the closure member 10 130 is in the second position P2, the plug 140 is secured in place thereby preventing unwanted movement of the closure member 130. This securement prevents the plug 140 and the closure member 130 from becoming dislodged while a user discharges the contents of the container through the opening 128. By retaining the plug 140 in the second position P2, the closure member 130 does not interfere with a user discharging the flowable contents 15 through the opening 128.

Once the plug 140 is dislodged from the opening 128, the closure member 130 is movable from the first position P1 to the second position P2. Similarly, once the once the plug 140 is dislodged from the retaining member 151, the closure member 130 is movable from the second position P2 to the first position P1.

20 The lid 110 includes a center portion 157 positioned radially inward of the top wall 112. The center portion 157 includes a recessed portion 164 that is adapted to receive a lip of a person drinking from the container. The shape and configuration of the recessed portion 164 can be varied to conform to numerous design parameters.

25 Referring to FIG. 10, the opening 128 and the retaining member 151 are opposed on the top wall 112, meaning that they are positioned approximately 180 degrees apart. In addition, the closure member 130 is positioned near the retaining member 151. Specifically, the first end 132 extends from a portion of the lid 110 proximate the retaining member 151. In this configuration, the closure member 130 is easily moved between the first and second

positions P1, P2. It is understood that the positions of the opening 128 and the retaining member 151 can vary according to the design parameters. The specific location of the closure member 130 on the skirt 127 may also vary with the design parameters.

FIG. 11 discloses another preferred embodiment of the lid of the present invention.

As shown in FIG. 11, the lid 210 generally includes an annular top wall 214 and a side wall 216 depending from an outer or peripheral edge 218 of the top wall 214. Although the top wall 214 is shown as having a generally flat upper surface 214a, the upper surface 214a can be curved or angled. The side wall 216 has a side wall surface 216a and a lower edge 220. The side wall surface 216a can be curved, angled, or generally flat. The overall shape of the lid 210 is generally frustaconical, however, the lid 210 can have a number of other configurations.

A mounting portion 222 depends from the lower edge 220 of the side wall 218. The mounting portion 222 includes a generally annular flange 224 and a generally annular skirt 226. The mounting portion 222 is adapted for connecting the lid 210 to the container in a manner that seals the lid 210 on the container. Thus, the mounting portion 222 prevents leakage of the container contents between the lid 210 and the container when the lid 210 is positioned on the container. In a preferred embodiment, the mounting portion 222 is integral with the side wall 216.

An aperture or drink opening 228 is located preferably in the top wall 216. Alternatively, the drink opening 228 is located in the side wall 216. The opening 228 is adapted to permit the passage or flow of the flowable contents held by the container through the cover 212. The opening 228 has an edge 229 that defines the shape of the opening 228. Although shown in FIG. 11 as having an obround shape, the opening 228 can have a variety of shapes, including but not limited to circular, square, or rectangular.

The opening 228 can be formed with a range of dimensions. At a minimum, the opening 228 should have dimensions sufficient to permit the passage of the flowable substance held by the container. The opening 228 can be located at various positions along the top wall 214 depending upon design parameters.

As shown in FIG. 11, a center portion 236 is positioned radially inward from an inner edge 238 of the top wall 214. Preferably, the center portion 236 is recessed such that the center portion 236 has a curvilinear configuration when viewed in cross-section. Described in a different manner, the center portion 236 has a concave shape when the portion 236 is viewed from a point above the lid 210. The degree of recess or curvature of the center portion 236 can vary with the design parameters of the lid 210.

The side wall 216 has a recessed portion 240 that is adapted to receive a lip of a person drinking from the container. An edge 242 of recessed portion 240 defines the configuration of the portion 240. The recessed portion 240 and the recessed surface 240a are positioned radially inward from the side wall surface 216a. Although the recessed portion 240 is shown positioned on both the top wall 214 and the side wall 216, the recessed portion 240 can be limited to either the top wall 214 or the side wall 216. The shape and configuration of the recessed portion 240 can be varied to conform to numerous design parameters. Similarly, the degree of recess of the portion 240 can vary. Preferably, the recessed portion 240 is positioned about the drink opening 228. The top wall 214 and the side wall 216 cooperate to form a rounded edge 240b at the recessed portion 240.

The lid 210 also has a closure member 230. Preferably, the closure member 230 is positioned on a portion of the annular skirt 226. The closure member 230 includes a first end 232, a second end 234, and an intermediate portion 236. The first end 232 includes a base portion 238. Preferably, the first end 232 extends from the skirt 226, however, the first end 232 could depend from a portion of the top wall 212, the side wall 218, or the mounting portion 224. The closure member 230 is preferably formed from the same material of the lid 210. The closure member 230 is adapted to be flexible. The second end 234 has a tab 239 and a plug 240. A notch 250 can be located between an upper portion and a lower portion of the plug 240.

As shown in FIG.11, a retaining member 251 is preferably located in the top wall 212. Alternatively, the retaining member 251 is located in a portion of the side wall 216 or a portion of the mounting portion 222. The retaining member 251 includes a cavity 252

adapted to receive and/or secure the plug 240 of the closure member 230. An inner wall depends from an upper edge (not shown) of the member 251 and terminates at a generally planar bottom wall. The retaining member 251 is generally configured to receive at least a portion of the plug 240 in an interference fit as described in greater detail below.

5 At a first position P1, the opening 228 receives at least a portion of the plug 240. When the plug 240 is located in the first position, the edge 229 of the opening 228 is in frictional engagement with a portion of the plug 240. Described in a different manner, the plug 240 and the opening 228 are in an interference fit wherein at least a portion of the plug 240 is positioned below the top wall 212. When the closure member 230 is in the first
10 position P1, the plug 240 forms a seal with the opening 228. This seal prevents the flow of the flowable substance in the container through the opening 228, enabling the container and lid 210 to be moved without risking spillage.

15 At a second position, P2, the retaining member 251 receives at least a portion of the plug 240. When the plug 240 is located in the second position P2, a portion of the retaining member 251 is in frictional engagement with a portion of the plug 240. Described in a different manner, the plug 240 and the cavity 252 are in an interference fit wherein at least a portion of the plug 240 are positioned below the top wall 212. When the closure member 230 is in the second position P2, the plug 240 is secured in place thereby preventing unwanted movement of the closure member 230. This securement prevents the plug 240 and
20 the closure member 230 from becoming dislodged while a user discharges the contents of the container through the opening 228. By retaining the plug 240 in the second position P2, the closure member 230 does not interfere with a user discharging the flowable contents through the opening 228.

25 Referring to FIG. 11, the opening 228 and the retaining member 251 are opposed on the top wall 214, meaning that they are positioned approximately 180 degrees apart. In addition, the closure member 230 is positioned near the retaining member 251. Specifically, the first end 232 extends from a portion of the lid 210 proximate the retaining member 251. In this configuration, the closure member 230 is easily moved between the first and second

positions P1, P2. Unlike prior art designs, the dimensions and the configuration of the opening 228 are not affected by the engagement and disengagement of the plug 240 as the closure member 230 is moved between the first and second positions P1, P2. This attribute allows a user to repeatedly move the closure member 230 between the first position P1 and the second position P2.

The lid 210 has a generally thin-wall construction. Although shown as having a generally circular shape, the lid 210, including the mounting portion 222, can have numerous configurations. For example, the lid 210 could have a rectangular, square, or oval shape. To ensure a leak-proof seal with the container, the shape of the mounting portion 222 should match the shape of the upper edge of the container so a cooperative sealing engagement can be achieved.

FIG. 12 discloses another preferred embodiment of the lid of the present invention. As shown in FIG. 12, the lid 310 is similar to the lid 210 shown in FIG. 11. However, the closure member 330 originates from a position between the opening 328 and the retaining member 351. Specifically, the first end 332 of the closure member 330 is positioned approximately 90 degrees from the opening 328. Described in another manner, the first end 332 is positioned approximately 90 degrees from retaining member 351. Described in yet another manner, the second end 334 is positioned approximately 180 degrees from the opening 328.

In addition, the closure member 330 has a curvilinear, arc shape that is similar to the curvilinear shape of the mounting portion 324 and/or the top wall 312. The arc length of the closure member 330, as measured from the first end 332 to the second end 334, can vary according to numerous design parameters. Preferably, the arc length ranges from one-fifth to one-half the circumference of the top wall 312. In a most preferred embodiment, the arc length is approximately 90 degrees. Described in another manner, a vector drawn radially inward from each of ends 332, 334 would intersect to form an approximately 90 degree angle. The closure member 330 can be moved between a first position and a second position as described above.

The position of the retaining element 51 in the top wall 12 with respect to the drink opening 28 can vary. The retaining element 51 can be positioned at varying locations on the lid 10. In one preferred embodiment, the retaining element 51 can be positioned in a range from generally five degrees to one hundred and eighty degrees from the drink opening 28.

5 As shown in FIGS. 13 and 14, the retaining element 51 is positioned at an angle θ that is approximately one hundred and eighty degrees from the drink opening 28. Described in a different manner, the retaining element 51 is positioned at twelve o'clock and the drink opening 28 is positioned at six o'clock.

As explained above, the precise position of the retaining member in the top wall can vary with the design parameters of the lid. Consistent with that, FIG. 15 discloses an alternate embodiment of a lid of the present invention, generally designated with the reference numeral 410. Like structures from the previous embodiments are labeled with 400 series reference numbers. Accordingly, the lid 410 generally includes a top wall 412, a side wall 418 and a mounting portion 424 depending from the side wall 418. A retaining element or member 451 is located in the top wall 412 and is configured to receive at least a portion of a closure member 430, where the closure member 430 includes a flexible arm 436 and a plug 440. The dimensions of the closure member 430, including the arm 436, correspond to the location of the retaining member 451 to ensure that the plug 440 is capable of being received by the drink opening 428 and/or the retaining member 451. The retaining element 451 is positioned at an angle θ that is approximately one hundred fifty degrees from the drink opening 428. As a result, the angular positional relationship θ is obtuse, meaning greater than 90 degrees and less than 180 degrees. Described in a different manner, the retaining element 451 is positioned at roughly one o'clock and the drink opening 428 is positioned at six o'clock. Although not shown, one of skill in the art recognizes that the retaining element 451 can be positioned at roughly eleven o'clock thereby ensuring the angular position of roughly one hundred fifty degrees with respect to the opening 428.

FIG. 16 discloses an alternate embodiment of a lid of the present invention, generally designated with the reference numeral 510. A retaining element or member 551 is located

in the top wall 512 and is configured to receive an extent of a closure member 530. The retaining element 551 is positioned at an angle θ that is approximately one hundred twenty degrees from the drink opening 528. As a result, the angular positional relationship θ is obtuse. Described in a different manner, the retaining element 551 is positioned at roughly two o'clock and the drink opening 528 is positioned at six o'clock. Although not shown, the retaining element 551 can be positioned at roughly ten o'clock thereby maintaining the angular position of approximately one hundred twenty degrees with respect to the opening 528.

FIG. 17 discloses an alternate embodiment of a lid of the present invention, generally designated with the reference numeral 610. The lid 610 generally includes a top wall 612, a side wall 618 and a mounting portion 624 depending from the side wall 618. A retaining element or member 651 is located in the top wall 612 and is configured to receive at least a portion of the closure member 630. The retaining element 651 is positioned at an angle θ that is approximately ninety degrees from the drink opening 628. Described in a different manner, the retaining element 651 is positioned at roughly three o'clock and the drink opening 628 is positioned at six o'clock. In this configuration, the retaining element 651 is positioned near the base portion 638 of the closure member 630.

FIG. 18 discloses another alternate embodiment of a lid of the present invention, generally designated with the reference numeral 710. A retaining element or member 751 is located in a top wall 712 and is configured to receive at least a portion of the closure member 730. The retaining element 751 is positioned at an angle θ that is approximately sixty degrees from the drink opening 728. As a result, the angular positional relationship θ is acute, meaning less than 90 degrees. Described in a different manner, the retaining element 751 is positioned at roughly four o'clock and the drink opening 728 is positioned at six o'clock. Described in yet another manner, the retaining element 751 is positioned in the top wall 712 between the drink opening 728 and the base portion 738 of the closure member 730. One of skill in the art recognizes that the retaining element 751 can be positioned at roughly eight o'clock (not shown) thereby maintaining the angular position of

approximately sixty degrees with respect to the opening 428.

FIG. 19 discloses an alternate embodiment of a lid of the present invention, generally designated with the reference numeral 810. The lid 810 generally includes a top wall 812, a side wall 818 and a mounting portion 824 depending from the side wall 818. A retaining element or member 851 is located in the top wall 812 and is configured to receive at least a portion of the closure member 830. The retaining element 851 is positioned at an angle θ that is approximately thirty degrees from the drink opening 828. As a result, the angular positional relationship θ is acute. Described in a different manner, the retaining element 851 is positioned at roughly five o'clock and the drink opening 828 is positioned at six o'clock.

This means that the retaining element 851 is positioned in the top wall 812 between the drink opening 828 and the base portion 838 of the closure member 830. One of skill in the art recognizes that the retaining member 851 can be positioned in the seven o'clock position, thereby maintaining the angular position of approximately thirty degrees with respect to the opening 428.

FIG. 20 discloses another alternate embodiment of a lid of the present invention, generally designated with the reference numeral 910. A retaining element or member 951 is located in a top wall 912 and is configured to receive at least a portion of the closure member 930. The retaining element 951 is positioned at an angle θ that is approximately ninety degrees from the drink opening 928. Described in a different manner, the retaining element 951 is positioned at roughly nine o'clock and the drink opening 928 is positioned at six o'clock. Described in yet another manner, the retaining element 951 is positioned in the top wall 912 across from the base portion 938 of the closure member 930.

FIG. 21 discloses another alternate embodiment of a lid of the present invention, generally designated with the reference numeral 1010. A retaining element or member 1051 is located in a top wall 1012 and is configured to receive at least a portion of the closure member 1030. The retaining element 1051 is positioned at an angle θ that is approximately one hundred fifty degrees from the drink opening 1028. Described in a different manner, the retaining element 1051 is positioned at roughly one o'clock and the drink opening 1028 is

positioned at six o'clock. The lid 1010 also includes a closure member 1030 that extends from a different location of the lid 1010 than previously shown. The closure member 1030 includes a plug 1040 and a flexible arm 1036 that extends from the mounting portion 1024 at approximately the four o'clock position. Thus, the flexible arm 1036 is positioned at an angle Ω that is approximately sixty degrees from the drink opening 1028. The dimensions of the closure member 1030, including the length of the curvilinear arm 1036 are configured to ensure that the plug 1040 to be received by both the drink opening 1028 and the retaining member 1051. One of skill in the art recognizes that the retaining member 1051 can be positioned at the roughly eleven o'clock thereby maintaining the angular position of approximately one hundred fifty degrees from the drink opening 1028. In this positional relationship, the length of the arm 1036 of the closure member 1030 could be increased to further the reception of the plug 1040 by the retaining member 1051.

In another alternative (not shown), the lid 10 has a plurality of retaining members 51 in the top wall 12. For example, a first retaining member 51 is positioned at nine o'clock and a second retaining member 51 is positioned at three o'clock, while the drink opening 28 is positioned at six o'clock. This means the first and second retaining members 51 are in an opposed positional relationship in the top wall 12. As another example, the retaining members 51 are positioned in the top wall 12 at roughly forty-five degrees from the drink opening 28. In each of these examples, the first and second retaining members 51 are equivalently distanced from the drink opening 28. However, the first and second retaining members 51 could be distinctly positioned in the top wall 12 with respect to the drink opening 28. Thus, the first retaining member 51 is positioned at seven o'clock and the second retaining member 51 is positioned at roughly three o'clock.

Although Figures 1-21 depict the retaining member 51 positioned in the top wall 12, the retaining member 51 can be located in a different region of the lid 10. For example, the retaining member 51 can be positioned in the side wall 18, the central portion 57, or the mounting portion 24. The closure member 30 is dimensioned to accommodate the positioning of the retaining member 51. Consequently, the arc length of the closure member

30 accommodates the location of the retaining member 51 to ensure that the plug 40 of the closure member 30 is capable of being received by both the drink opening 28 and the retaining member 51. Thus, the arc length of the closure member 30 can vary as required by the design parameters of the lid 10.

5 While the specific embodiments have been illustrated and described, numerous modifications come to mind without significantly departing from the spirit of the invention and the scope of protection is only limited by the scope of the accompanying Claims.